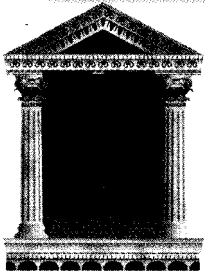


# A Great Roman: Julius Caesar 13



**ail to the Conqueror!** In the years after the Punic Wars, Rome continued to look for new areas to conquer and new peoples to govern. The young men of Rome's most powerful families were eager to gain fame by leading a Roman army in battle.

They looked forward to the wealth, honor, and power they would gain if they were successful. Julius Caesar, who lived from 101–44 B.C., was one of these ambitious young men.

Caesar belonged to a patrician family, but he was not wealthy. He knew that if he was going to get ahead in life, he would have to do it through military advancement. Caesar lived at a time when the Roman Republic was beginning to have some problems. The consuls and the Senate still ruled, but governors in the provinces were not always just and often forced people to pay high taxes. People in some of the conquered territories were unhappy about how they were governed. Rome had to rely on the strength of the army to keep the republic together.

There had been changes in the Roman army, too. The army was no longer manned by ordinary citizens. It had become a professional army. This meant that the men who joined the army did so to further their careers. They were willing to fight, but mostly they wanted to get rich and gain higher status. They felt more loyalty to the generals who could lead them to victory than they did to Rome itself. If one of these generals had

wanted to lead the army against Rome, he could have. The Senate was aware of this, and so they had made a law that the army could not come into the city of Rome itself.

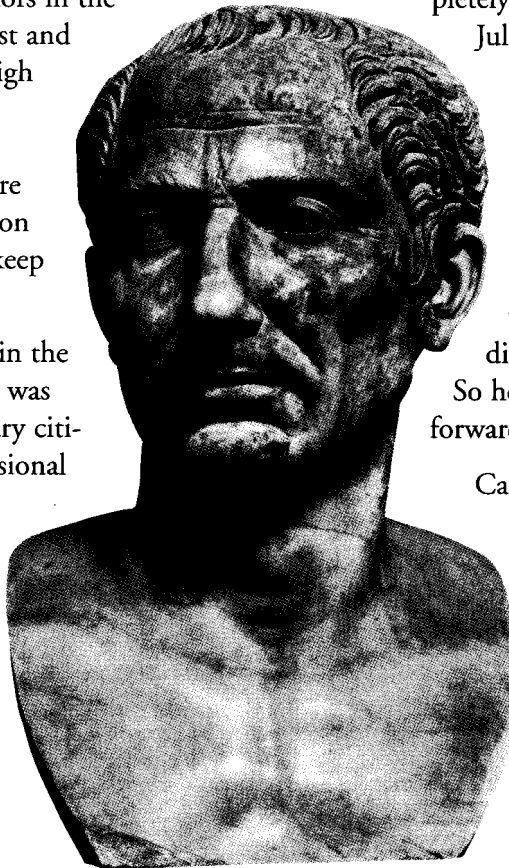
The army had always been important to the Roman Republic, but now it was more important than ever. The generals who led the army were extremely powerful and could do great good or great harm. It was just a matter of time before someone tried to take over the republic completely. It turned out that that man was Julius Caesar.

## The Rise to Power

Caesar was tall and well-built. He had dark-brown eyes and liked to look good. He kept his hair trimmed and his face clean-shaven. It bothered him that he was almost bald, and people who didn't like him teased him about it. So he combed what hair he had left forward on the top of his head.

Caesar was intelligent and had a good sense of humor. He could be charming and courteous when he wanted to be. But Caesar was also a very ambitious and determined man. He could be ruthless, and he was also arrogant.

Caesar commanded part of the Roman army, but this was not enough for him. He wanted as much power as he



*July, the seventh month of our modern calendar year, is named for Julius Caesar.*



*This fifteenth-century illustrated French manuscript depicts Caesar's troops during the Gallic Wars.*

could get. Caesar knew that in order to get what he wanted, he would have to be victorious in battle so that his soldiers would be more loyal to him than to Rome. He would also need to have political allies in Rome. If he helped others get some of the power they wanted, then he could use them to get the power that he wanted.

To become powerful at this time, it was important to be popular with the right people in Rome. So Caesar spent money entertaining others and making friends. Once he was popular, Caesar entered into an alliance with two other powerful Roman men named Pompey (PAHM pee) and Crassus (KRAS us). They helped one another to pass laws they wanted and schemed to keep the power that their enemies wanted to take from them. Caesar became powerful enough to be elected consul in 59 B.C.

Next, Caesar became one of the most successful generals the Roman army had ever seen. He

helped to expand the Roman Republic in Europe. It took him about nine years to fight the Gallic Wars, which gave Rome power in Gaul (modern-day France). He even invaded Britain in 55 B.C., although Rome would not conquer the island until the next century. Much of northern Europe was coming under the control of the Mediterranean world and would be influenced by the culture and laws of the Romans.

After he had conquered Gaul, Caesar decided that he wanted to be elected consul again. However, the first time he had been consul he had been proud and arrogant. He had also done some things he should not have done. Worse, his alliance with Pompey and Crassus had broken down. Pompey, in particular, realized that Caesar was using him; he did not trust Caesar anymore and wanted to get Caesar out of power.

No one becomes powerful without making enemies, and Caesar had made some strong ones.

Now these enemies were determined to keep Caesar from becoming consul again. They told Caesar that if he wanted to be elected consul, he had to come to Rome for the election. They also reminded him that he was not allowed to bring his army into Rome. But Caesar knew that if he went to Rome without his army, Pompey would have him arrested. Caesar faced a difficult situation. He wanted to be consul again, but it seemed impossible without breaking the law and taking at least part of his army into the city.

## Dictator for Life

Caesar was not afraid to do things the hard way. In 49 B.C. he gathered his army and marched toward Rome. By crossing the Rubicon River, the northern boundary of Italy, he showed the Senate that he would fight them for power. Caesar understood that now there was no turning back. Legend has it that when he crossed the Rubicon he said, "The die is cast." Today, we use the phrases "the die is cast" and "crossing the Rubicon" to mean taking decisive action and going beyond the point of no return.

Caesar's actions started a civil war. Caesar and his army now had to fight it out with other parts of the Roman army. The existence of the Roman Republic itself was at stake.

Caesar quickly took control of Italy, but Pompey and his army managed to escape. Caesar had to spend some time chasing them down. Caesar and Pompey clashed in Spain as well as in Egypt. At last, in 44 B.C., Caesar achieved what he had wanted all along. He became the **dictator**, or absolute ruler, of Rome.

The Romans had known dictators before. In fact, they felt that in times of emergency, a dictator was necessary. But dictatorship was seen

as a temporary thing, to be used only in wartime. Legally, dictatorships could only last six months.

### vocabulary

**dictator** the absolute ruler of a city or country

Caesar had something else in mind. He thought the idea of a temporary dictator was silly. What kind of foolish person would willingly give up ultimate power simply because the Senate told him to? Caesar was not going to give up the power he had gained. He made sure that everyone knew he meant to be the ruler for a long time. He had his face put on coins (something only kings did at this time) and the month of Quintilis was renamed Julius (July) in his honor.

Caesar had always loved the attention that he got from being a public figure. Nothing pleased him more than to have the privilege of wearing a laurel wreath, the symbol of conquerors and victors. But opponents said it looked like he was wearing a royal crown.

During the five years since Caesar had crossed the Rubicon, he had gained absolute power. True, he had to spend a lot of his time making sure that his enemies could not overthrow him, but he had also genuinely tried to improve things for people. Caesar had plans to make more people Roman citizens, stop corruption, improve the court system, and help people avoid falling into debt. He seemed to work constantly. He dictated letters while he was riding to battle. He worked quickly and tirelessly, but there was simply more work than one man could do.

## Out of Touch

Caesar found it difficult to give other people things to do. In part, this was because he distrusted everyone and wanted to be in complete control. But it was also true that many government officials wouldn't cooperate with him because they were horrified by the bloody civil wars that pitted Roman against Roman. Many blamed Caesar for the collapse of the republic.

The pressures of being dictator began to make Caesar sick. He was exhausted, tense and irritable. He began to feel dizzy and suffered from convulsions and blackouts. Accounts from the time said he suffered from epilepsy. Epilepsy is a disease of the nervous system that causes sudden convulsions and blackouts.



*Vicenzo Camuccini, an eighteenth-century Italian artist painted this scene of Julius Caesar's assassination.*

Although Caesar had been an excellent general, he was not an especially good dictator. He was arrogant and offended many powerful Romans. He even dismissed his bodyguards, saying that no one could possibly want to murder him since his death would only bring about chaos.

This showed that Caesar was seriously out of touch. He did not recognize how much some people hated him. Then, in February of 44 B.C., Caesar went even further. He had the Senate vote him dictator for life.

There had long been powerful people in Rome who did not like the fact that Caesar had become dictator. Once he declared himself dictator for life, even more people grew angry with Caesar. They blamed him for destroying the republic—and they were prepared to do something about it.

### **The Betrayal**

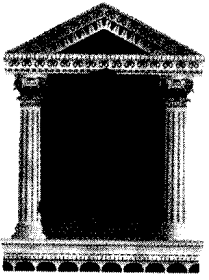
Caesar never seemed to realize how much pain he had caused the Roman people when he forced Roman to fight against Roman in the civil wars he started. He never seemed to realize that Romans were proud of the republic and did not want to see the days of the kings brought back. This shortsightedness caused his downfall.

About a month after he was made dictator for life, Caesar was murdered in the Senate house by several members of the Roman Senate. There were about 60 conspirators altogether, although only a handful actually drove their weapons into Caesar. The leaders of the assassination plot were Brutus (BROOT us) and Cassius. Tradition has it that as he was being stabbed, Caesar noticed Brutus among the men surrounding him and said, "Et tu, Brute?" (et tu BROO tay?) This is Latin for "You too, Brutus?" He had considered Brutus a friend, and he was shocked that Brutus had joined the conspiracy against him.

Caesar had destroyed the republic in his quest for power, but he had not had the time—or perhaps the ability—to put a new form of government in its place. His assassination ended his rule and left the leaders of Rome to try to figure out who should rule in his place.

Julius Caesar is remembered today as a great general who did much to increase the power of Rome. Although he destroyed the Roman Republic, he also paved the way for the Roman Empire. He is the link between the republic that Rome had been and the empire it would become.

# The Age of Augustus 14



**New Beginning** When Julius Caesar was assassinated another civil war broke out. After 13 years of fighting, Octavian, the great nephew of Julius Caesar, managed to become sole ruler of Rome and all its provinces.

This was no easy task. Octavian had to defeat Brutus and Cassius, the conspirators who had killed Caesar. He also had to defeat Mark Antony, who was romantically and militarily allied with the queen of Egypt, Cleopatra. By A.D. 27, however, Octavian had eliminated all of these rivals and established himself as the first Roman emperor. To celebrate this achievement, the Roman Senate named him Caesar Augustus.

Although Augustus was related to Julius Caesar, the two men were very different. Unlike his great uncle, Augustus was not considered good looking. His teeth were small, dirty, and widely separated. He wasn't interested in what he wore or how he looked. He wasn't tall, and from the time he was young, he had suffered from bad health. Although he was a busy man, he hated getting up early. He would sleep as late and as long as possible.

Augustus was also different from Julius Caesar in another important way. Julius Caesar had been a brave soldier but a bad administrator. Augustus avoided battle as much as possible and was never known as a good soldier, but he turned out to be a very good administrator.

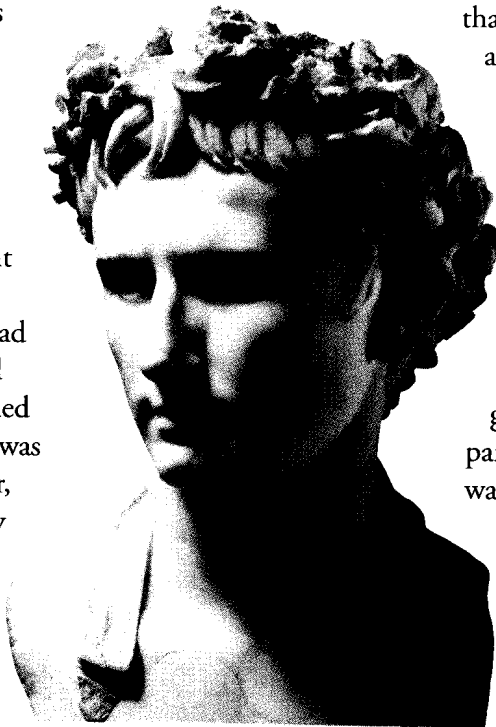
Augustus realized that Romans had stopped feeling proud of themselves and their empire. They

had been through years of warfare, and it must have seemed like the government didn't care about them. Augustus knew that for the Roman Empire to be strong, Romans had to believe in it. So he made some changes.

To restore Romans' confidence, Augustus began an ambitious building program. He brought architects, sculptors, and artists to Rome to create beautiful buildings. He had his architects copy the majesty of Greek architecture and art. His buildings were often made of marble and spared no expense. He built great arches celebrating events in Roman history and had statues of great Romans made. All of this helped to promote his image of Rome as the capital of an empire

that stood for order, strength, honor, and permanence. Romans could be proud. Later, Augustus would boast that he had "inherited [the city of Rome] brick and left it marble."

Augustus rebuilt the temples and re-established the religion of the Romans so that people could believe in the old gods and goddesses again. By making religion part of being a good citizen, Augustus was giving Romans a sense of identity. He helped them figure out who they were and what they believed, and he gave them the feeling that they were part of something great. After years of chaos, Rome had a new beginning.



*This marble bust of Augustus was created about 30–20 B.C.*



## Virgil

As part of his program to make Romans proud again, Augustus encouraged the arts. Like wealthy rulers before and after him (including Pericles), he became a patron of the arts.

Maecenas (mye SEE nus), one of the friends of Augustus and a rich and important politician, was also a patron of the arts. For years he invited poets to write about Augustus and all he was doing for the empire. One of the poets he talked to was a man named Publius Vergilius Maro, known as Virgil.

Like the other Roman poets at this time, Virgil admired Greek poetry and imitated its style. He wanted to write a great poem that would celebrate the glory of Rome, but he disagreed with Maecenas' suggestion that the poem should be mainly about Augustus. Virgil had a different idea.

### The Aeneid

The poem that Virgil wrote for Augustus and Maecenas is called the *Aeneid* (ee NEE ihd). It is the greatest epic poem produced in Ancient Rome. The *Aeneid* tells the story of Aeneas (ee NEE us), a great warrior who survived the defeat of the Trojans during the Trojan War and who journeyed across the Mediterranean to found Rome. All along the way, Aeneas ran into obstacles and temptations. For instance, a beautiful queen of Carthage named Dido fell in love with him and tried to get him to stay with her. But Aeneas knew that it was his destiny to establish a great city in Italy, so he left Dido heartbroken and continued on. Aeneas refused to allow anything to stand between him and his destiny.

Virgil died before he completed the *Aeneid*, but his epic poem is still a great piece of literature as well as a powerful piece of Roman propaganda. The *Aeneid* gave the Romans an exciting past and a national hero, and it taught them that Rome was worth the sacrifices that Aeneas had made.

Augustus was excited about Virgil's poem and begged to see parts of it as the poet worked on it. Even though it wasn't a poem about him, Augustus knew that the *Aeneid* was exactly the

kind of literature he wanted. He knew that this poem glorified Rome and would make the citizens love the Roman Empire.

### Law and Order

Unlike Julius Caesar, who had shortsightedly forgotten how many Romans would hate a king or any other absolute ruler, Augustus always remembered how easy it would be for someone to assassinate him. So he took care to include the Senate in the responsibilities of ruling. He never gave up power and never believed in democracy, but he was careful about how he ruled. Augustus avoided Julius Caesar's mistake of being arrogant. He modestly called himself the princeps (PRIHN keps), or "first citizen." The Senate gave him another title—that of Imperator, or emperor, meaning "he who commands."

During his reign as emperor, Augustus accomplished several things. Among the greatest of these was the strengthening of Roman law. Augustus made it clear that, while he was a powerful ruler, the law limited his power. The Senate and other Roman leaders knew that he had some responsibilities and they had other responsibilities. This helped to establish confidence in the emperor and in Roman rule.

Augustus also changed the way the military was run. He divided the army into two parts. The first part was made up of 30 legions of Roman citizens. This amounted to about 165,000 troops in total. Each legion was commanded by a senator who had to report to more powerful senators. This system was meant to ensure that no individual senator would control an army strong enough to attack Rome.

The second part of the army was made up of men who were not Roman citizens. They were commanded by noblemen and divided into sections that were smaller than the legions. Men who were not from wealthy or powerful families could serve in this part of the army and make good careers for themselves.

In the past the Roman army had been supported by the plunder it gathered after victories. Augustus changed this as well. Generals and

soldiers could still get rich from the plunder they took, but the army would be supported and supplied by Rome. Augustus established a special treasury just for the army. This meant that generals had to depend on Rome for supplies. They would be less likely to want to turn on Rome because if they did so, they would have their supplies cut off. By making these changes, Augustus was trying to ensure that there would never be another Julius Caesar to threaten Rome—or any other rivals to threaten Augustus himself.

By this time, the empire had become about as large as it could be. Despite good Roman roads, it could take more than a year to cross it. So now the army was mainly used to keep order.

Law and order brought peace to the Roman Empire. Called the **Pax Romana**, or Roman peace, this was a time of calm and law throughout the Mediterranean world. It would last nearly 200 years.

Such a long time of peace had never been experienced within an empire before. Centuries later, people from many different parts of the world would admire the Pax Romana and try to achieve something similar in their own countries.

Caesar Augustus was the first emperor of the Roman Empire. He established the empire and ruled it well. He understood how to work with the Senate, how to help citizens feel proud of Rome, and how to use the army to keep a peace that lasted for centuries. For all of these reasons, Augustus is remembered as one of Rome's greatest leaders.

**vocabulary**  
**Pax Romana** the period of peace and order throughout the Roman Empire that lasted for nearly 200 years and began with the first emperor, Caesar Augustus

*At its height, the Roman Empire stretched over 2 million square miles.*

### Growth of the Roman Empire



## Compare and Contrast Activity

Using the information you have learned about Julius Caesar and his nephew, Augustus, write a paragraph that compares and contrasts the **physical appearances**, **personal leadership styles** and **legacies** of the two Caesars. Use the area below to devise a plan for your paragraph.

	Julius	Augustus
Physical Appearance	1.  2.  3.	1.  2.  3.
Personal Leadership Styles	1.  2.  3.	1.  2.  3.
Legacies	1.  2.  3.	1.  2.  3.



